

## LOCAL CHURCH HISTORY

Researching – Writing & Editing – Publishing

Welcome and get acquainted

Pule

Kahu

### **Why write histories?**

How many of you have read the history of a church? Your own, or another?

(Record responses on white board)

How did you feel about it?

What things did you like – insofar as you can remember?

What disappointed you?

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **SECTION I – Getting Started**

- A. Basic organization of project. Try to recruit the leader – someone who (1) has a flexible approach to leadership and (2) among those most familiar with your history. Then add two to four others to put the plan together.
- B. Issues involved

We already have a history, written in 1960

What story do we want to tell? \*\*\* this will need to be revisited occasionally, as material gathered adds perspective

What is our timeline? (Set deadlines early, but be ready to revise as needed)

What will this cost? How will it be paid for? Who will follow through on securing funding?

How will we gather material? Who will do each part of the work?

What should the end product look like?

What title will we give it?

## SECTION II – Research

**ORIENTATION FOR YOUR WORKING GROUP:** Ask everyone to read one or more histories of your church or other churches (they don't have to be UCC). Discuss what you have found. Look for things to avoid & good ideas to use – style, format, emphasis.

### WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

Essential facts about beginnings, buildings, major challenges, individuals who had a central role

Special Moments and outstanding individuals

Connections – how & when was the church connected to other organizations?

Local economic, political, educational life – how did the church relate to schools, government, business & industry?

Local – food banks, homeless shelters, welcoming refugees, space use by other churches, response to other needs and concerns?

Larger settings – Ecumenical and denominational:

Other local churches, mokupuni, conference, Women's Board of Missions, youth, national UCC

### WHERE DO WE GET THE INFORMATION?

**PICTURES, VIDEO:** Very important to success. Ask church members if they have photos or film that might be used. Look for pictures of buildings, early families, pastors, church organizations, marriages, baptisms, the local community as it once looked.

**INTERVIEWS:** Not as simple as it sounds. For a good Oral History procedures overview

see: <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/oral-history-primer>

### LIBRARIES:

Hawaii Missionary Children's Society Library

Local libraries and historical societies

Congregational Library, 14 Beacon St., Boston MA 02108; 617-523-0470;  
[info@14beacon.org](mailto:info@14beacon.org). Ask for resources on creating your local church history

## CHURCH RECORDS:

Congregation: newsletters, minutes, baptism and membership lists, previous anniversary celebrations. Find lists and dates of pastors, church school superintendents, moderators, associate and assistant ministers, organists, choir directors, etc. Look for letters or similar documents attached to minutes of deacons, council, trustees, building committees, mission committees. Ask families in your church if they have any saved letters from earlier years that refer to the church.

Mokupuni or Hawaii Conference records: Look for information relating to the founding of the church, initial financial support, pastors or missionaries assigned, etc. How did the conference and/or association help?

NEWSPAPERS: Once dates of interest to you have been identified, newspapers from those times can be reviewed. Ask newspaper – if it does not keep back issues on file - the location and name of the library where their back copies are archived. Look especially for pictures of church activities and/or church members.

BOOKS: Church and missionary histories, such as Albertine Loomis: *To All People: A History of the Hawaii Conference of the United Church of Christ* (1970). Hiram Bingham: *A Residence of Twenty-one Years in the Sandwich Islands* (1847). Clifford Putney: *Missionaries in Hawaii* (2012 – the story of the Gulick family)

General histories of Hawaii or histories of your island and/or community.

LETTERS: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: letters sent to the Society by missionaries on the field are available in microfilm through Interlibrary Loan. Be sure that your library has a microfilm reader. One library that has all the microfilms of ABCFM: Graduate Theological Union Library, Berkeley CA. The microfilm is organized by mission fields (all letters from Hawaii are together) and, within that, years. In each year the letters are filed alphabetically by last name of missionary.

**BREAK**

**SECTION III – Publishing.** Find out publishing options. Decide which route you are going to take before your manuscript is “set in stone.”

Local – contact printers and publishers in your community to see what services they offer –at what cost.

Online Print-on-demand – this is a large and growing industry. Prices, and quality of service, may vary widely.

My (Don Sevetson’s) history with self-publishing.

What the publishers will expect from you

How they price their services

Options like pictures (“images”), color.

How to prepare an index.

Publication and sales policies and practices

Marketing experience and financial outcomes

Three online self-publishing companies to consider

Createspace (a subsidiary of Amazon)

Ingrams

Lulu.com

Deciding on your publisher early doesn’t require you to involve them at every step of the process.

## **SECTION IV - Writing and Editing**

Put the history of the church in its context – its time and place. What were the public events – world, nation, state (monarchy), denominational, community – that fill out the framework of what was taking place in the church? Overthrow, the two world wars, women’s rights, Viet Nam, the GI Bill. The reader doesn’t learn much from a series of “high points”. What were the struggles, challenges, setbacks? These won’t be easy to write about, but including them makes it a “real” history. Note: the hardest part will be writing about the recent years, because members of the church will differ in interpretations.

Identify tasks in the project:

Writers – there will be plenty for everyone to do. Divide their assignments among various categories.

Layout and illustrations – expect to pay for this if you don’t have someone who can do it

Decide on pricing and distribution policies. Be sure to order enough copies so that they can be given to new members over the next decade. Of course, with “Print on Demand”, it will be easy to order a specific quantity at any time.

Be sure to include indexes (1 - Names Index; 2 - General Index for organizations, places, events, ideas)

Executive editor – three responsibilities

Keep track of everyone’s progress,

Review, harmonize and edit to assure a consistent “voice and tone”

WARNING: Sensitive feelings can surface here.

Function as contact person with publisher

Proofreaders

TAKE CARE to give credit to sources. Secure copyright permission where necessary.

## **MARKETING**

Determine plans for promoting the book, occasions for author(s) to talk to local audiences. Who gets free copies, how and where do you sell?

**CLOSING** Discussion, questions

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